

1 CLAIMS

2 1. In a computer graphic processing system in which a ray is cast toward  
3 an object represented by a collection of pre-determined shapes each characterized  
4 by characteristic data, a method for determining which of the shapes are  
5 intersected by the ray, the method comprising:

6 defining a reference object relative to the represented object;

7 determining the positions of the shapes relative to the reference object  
8 using the characteristic data; and

9 determining, on the basis of the positions of the shapes relative to the  
10 reference object, those shapes that have no chance of intersecting the ray, and  
11 those remaining shapes that may intersect the ray.

12  
13 2. The method of claim 1 further comprising using a predetermined  
14 algorithm to determine which one of those remaining shapes intersects the ray.

15  
16 3. The method of claim 1, wherein the collection of shapes comprises at  
17 least one polygonal shape.

18  
19 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the collection of shapes comprises a  
20 plurality of polygonal shapes.

21  
22 5. The method of claim 1, wherein the collection of shapes comprises at  
23 least one triangle.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the collection of shapes comprises a plurality of triangles.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the collection of shapes comprises a triangle mesh.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the collection of shapes comprises a triangle strip.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the collection of shapes comprises a triangle fan.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein said reference object comprises at least one plane.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein said reference object comprises a plurality of planes each of which contain the ray.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein said determining the positions of the shapes comprises determining positional aspects of sub-components of individual ones of the shapes to provide the characteristic data.

1       **13.**   The method of claim 12, wherein the individual shapes comprise  
2 polygons and the sub-components comprise vertices that define the polygons, said  
3 determining the positions of the shapes comprising computing the positions of the  
4 vertices relative to the reference object.

5  
6       **14.**   The method of claim 13, wherein the reference object comprises a  
7 plane.

8  
9       **15.**   The method of claim 14, wherein the plane is parallel to one of the  
10  $x$ ,  $y$ , and  $z$  axes.

11  
12       **16.**   In a computer graphic processing system in which a ray is cast  
13 toward an object represented by a collection of pre-determined shapes, a method  
14 for determining which of the shapes are intersected by the ray, the method  
15 comprising:

16       defining a collection of polygons that approximate an object, individual  
17 polygons having a plurality of vertices;

18       casting a ray toward the approximated object;

19       defining a reference object relative to the collection of polygons and that  
20 contains the cast ray;

21       pre-characterizing at least some vertices of at least some of the polygons to  
22 provide characteristic data that describes the vertices' positions relative to the  
23 reference object; and

24       using the characteristic data to ascertain the positions of the individual  
25 polygons relative to the reference object.

1  
2       **17.**   The method of claim 16, wherein the collection of polygons  
3 approximate the surface of the object.

4  
5       **18.**   The method of claim 16, wherein the individual polygons have a  
6 similar geometry.

7  
8       **19.**   The method of claim 16, wherein the individual polygons comprise  
9 triangles.

10  
11       **20.**   The method of claim 16, wherein the collection of polygons has a  
12 plurality of faces and a plurality of vertices, said faces outnumbering said vertices.

13  
14       **21.**   The method of claim 16, wherein at least two of said polygons share  
15 at least one side.

16  
17       **22.**   The method of claim 16, wherein at least two of said polygons share  
18 at least one vertex.

19  
20       **23.**   The method of claim 16, wherein none of said polygons share a  
21 vertex.

24. The method of claim 16, wherein said using of the characteristic data comprises determining whether an individual polygon is in a sub-set of polygons that might be intersected by the ray.

25. The method of claim 16, wherein said using of the characteristic data comprises determining whether an individual polygon is in a sub-set of polygons at least some of which straddle the reference object.

26. The method of claim 16, wherein said using of the characteristic data comprises determining whether an individual polygon is in a sub-set of polygons at least some of which straddle the reference object, and further comprising evaluating the sub-set of polygons to determine which polygons are intersected by the ray.

27. In a computer graphic processing system in which a ray is cast toward an object represented by a collection of pre-determined shapes, a method for determining which of the shapes are intersected by the ray, the method comprising:

defining a plurality of triangles that approximate an object, individual triangles having three vertices;

casting a ray toward the approximated object;

defining at least one plane relative to the approximated object to contain the ray;

1 pre-characterizing the vertices of the plurality of triangles to provide  
2 characteristic data that describes the positions of the vertices relative to said at  
3 least one plane; and

4 using the characteristic data to ascertain the positions of the individual  
5 triangles relative to said at least one plane.

6  
7 **28.** The method of claim 27, wherein said defining of said plurality of  
8 triangles comprises defining a triangle mesh.

9  
10 **29.** The method of claim 27, wherein said defining of said plurality of  
11 triangles comprises defining a triangle fan.

12  
13 **30.** The method of claim 27, wherein said defining of said plurality of  
14 triangles comprises defining a triangle strip.

15  
16 **31.** The method of claim 27, wherein said using of the characteristic  
17 data comprises determining whether a particular individual triangle has a chance  
18 of being intersected by the ray.

19  
20 **32.** The method of claim 27, wherein said using of the characteristic  
21 data comprises determining whether a particular individual triangle straddles said  
22 at least one plane.  
23  
24  
25

1       **33.**   The method of claim 27, wherein said using of the characteristic  
2 data comprises defining a sub-set of triangles at least some of which straddle the  
3 plane, and further comprising evaluating the sub-set of triangles to ascertain which  
4 triangles are intersected by the ray.

5  
6       **34.**   The method of claim 27, wherein none of the triangles share any  
7 vertices.

8  
9       **35.**   The method of claim 27, wherein all of the triangles share at least  
10 one vertex with another of the triangles.

11  
12       **36.**   The method of claim 27, wherein said defining of said at least one  
13 plane comprises defining a plane to be parallel to one of the  $x$ ,  $y$ , or  $z$  axes.

14  
15       **37.**   In a computer graphic processing system in which a ray is cast  
16 toward an object represented by a collection of pre-determined polygons, a method  
17 for determining which of the polygons are intersected by the ray, the method  
18 comprising:

19       defining a sub-set of polygons from a collection of polygons that  
20 approximate an object by determining which polygons have vertices that satisfy a  
21 predefined relationship relative to a reference object; and

22       evaluating the sub-set of polygons to ascertain which of the polygons is  
23 intersected by a cast ray.

1       **38.**     The method of claim 37, wherein the reference object comprises a  
2 plane.

3  
4       **39.**     The method of claim 37, wherein the reference object comprises  
5 multiple planes.

6  
7       **40.**     The method of claim 37, wherein the reference object comprises a  
8 plane, and said determining comprises determining which polygons straddle the  
9 plane.

10  
11       **41.**     One or more computer-readable media having computer-readable  
12 instructions thereon which, when executed by a computer, implement the method  
13 of claim 37.

14  
15       **42.**     A programmable computer having a memory and a processor, the  
16 memory containing software code which causes the processor to execute the  
17 method of claim 37.

18  
19       **43.**     A computer graphic processing system comprising a programmable  
20 computer programmed with computer-readable instructions which, when executed  
21 by the programmable computer, implement the following method:

22         defining a plurality of polygons that approximate an object, individual  
23 polygons having a plurality of vertices;

24         casting a ray toward the approximated object;

25







1 software code stored in the memory that causes the processor to implement  
2 a ray-intersection algorithm which:

3 casts a ray at a collection of shapes that approximate an object;  
4 defines a reference object that contains the ray;  
5 pre-characterizes aspects of individual ones of the shapes of the  
6 collection to provide characteristic data; and  
7 uses the characteristic data to ascertain the position of the shapes of  
8 the collection of shapes relative to the reference object.

9  
10 **51.** The computer graphic processing system of claim 50, wherein the  
11 ray intersection algorithm casts a ray at a collection of polygons, each of which  
12 have similar geometries.

13  
14 **52.** The computer graphic processing system of claim 50, wherein the  
15 ray intersection algorithm casts a ray at a collection of triangles.

16  
17 **53.** The computer graphic processing system of claim 52, wherein the  
18 collection of triangles defines a triangle mesh.

19  
20 **54.** The computer graphic processing system of claim 50, wherein the  
21 ray intersection algorithm pre-characterizes aspects of the shapes by computing  
22 positions of various sub-components of the shapes relative to the reference object.  
23  
24  
25

1           **55.**   The computer graphic processing system of claim 54, wherein the  
2 reference object comprises at least one plane.

3  
4           **56.**   The computer graphic processing system of claim 55, wherein the  
5 shapes comprise polygons and the sub-components comprise vertices of the  
6 polygons.

7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25